

**Attention**  
**Syngenta Seed Company South Africa**  
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We, the undersigned civil society organisations, are deeply concerned about Syngenta's lack of accountability and aggression in pursuing its genetic engineering interests in Brazil. We condemn the attack by armed militia on peasant farmers in Paraná state, Brazil on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October, which resulted in the death of the farmer leader, Valmir Mota de Oliveira, and 6 others being seriously wounded. According to reports the peasants were conducting a peaceful protest at the site when a security company hired by Syngenta called in the armed militia [1].

We call on Syngenta to respect the wishes of the majority of farmers who do not wish to have their landrace crops and local environments polluted by engineered genes and untested technologies, to further the profits of an unaccountable foreign multinational. We support the struggle by the MST and Via Campesina to transform Syngenta's GMO testing area into a locally appropriate centre of Agro-ecology for the reproduction of native seeds for family farmers, which will also protect the nearby Iguazu Falls World Heritage Site.

We offer our sympathy and solidarity to the family of Valmir Mota, who was killed, and the six wounded victims and their families.

We support Via Campesina's demands for:

- the authorities in Brazil to conduct a thorough investigation and punish the gunmen – the culprits of these crimes – and those responsible for ordering the attack
- the immediate retreat of Syngenta from the area in Paraná where they have conducted the GMO field tests (which were illegally planted in a protected zone) so that these areas can be converted into peasant based, sustainable agriculture desired by the majority of people in the area
- the disbandment of armed militias in the region, and the immediate closure of the NF Security company
- assurance of the safety and protection of the lives of the leaders and workers of Via Campesina, MST and all peasant farmers in the region.

We trust that Syngenta will comply with any investigations into this violence and explain what has happened, including its role in this tragedy, to its shareholders and to the public.

We also hope that the South African government takes heed of the situation and moves to protect farmers in South Africa from the greed of foreign multinationals, as well as encouraging the Brazilian government to do the same, rather than siding with this new wave of global colonialists.

**Signed**  
African Centre for Biosafety  
Earthlife Africa eThekweni, Johannesburg, Namibia  
Diakona Council of Churches  
Emthonjeni South Africa  
Biowatch SA

Safe Food Coalition SA  
GRAIN  
PLANT  
Farmers Legal Action Group SA  
Ekogaia Foundation  
Earth Life Africa  
The Grail  
Timberwatch

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[1]

A Via Campesina encampment located at Syngenta's experimental GMO farm in Santa Tereza do Oeste (Paraná) was attacked by an armed militia on 21 October. During the massacre, an activist from the Movement of Landless Workers (MST) and member of Via Campesina, Valmir Mota de Oliveira, 42 years old (known as "Keno,") was killed at point-blank range by two shots to the chest. He had been threatened for the previous six months by the Syngenta/MPR/SRO consortium. Workers including Gentil Couto Viera, Jonas Gomes de Queiroz, Domingos Barretos, Izabel Nascimento de Souza, and Hudson Cardin were seriously injured.

According to Via Campesina, Syngenta was thought to be using the services of an armed militia which was acting through a front company, NF Security, in conjunction with the Rural Society of the Western Region (SRO) and the Movement of Rural Producers (MPR), which are tied to agribusiness.

Syngenta's experimental farm has been occupied by peasants since March 2006 to bring attention to the illegal cultivation of GMO soy and corn seeds. Syngenta was fined by the Brazilian Environment Protection Agency in 2006 for conducting illegal field trials of GM soy within the 10 km buffer zone around the Iguazu Falls World Heritage Site, but has still not paid the fine. Syngenta has since successfully lobbied the Brazilian government to change the law to reduce the buffer zone to just 500m.

Further information:

<http://viacampesina.org/>

<http://news.nacla.org/2007/10/29/corporate-murder-in-brazil-land-activists-shot-by-militia-linked-to-multinational/>